

09/928,546

In the Specification:

Please cancel second, third and fourth full paragraphs in column 3, lines 9-44 of the specification, in their entirety, in favor of a clean form of second, third and fourth full paragraphs in column 3, lines 9-44 as follows. Also accompanying this response is a copy of the original paragraphs of the specification which show the addition(s) (by underlining and bold) and the deletion(s) (by strikeout) to the canceled specification paragraphs. Please enter the replacement specification paragraphs into the record of this case.

CLEAN VERSION OF COLUMN 3, PARAGRAPHS 2, 3 AND 4

81 Supply location 30 represents a food preparation area (the first location) for supplying a number of consumer sites (the second location) 31, 32, 33 which are in this case hospitals which are some distance from each other and from supply location 30. The supply location 30 receives raw materials and supplies by path RM. At the supply location 30 food is prepared, cooled and plated and individual amounts for an individual consumer at one of the consumer sites are placed on a tray. Trays for delivery to a particular consumer location 31 are placed on one or more racks 15 as described in relation to FIG. 1. The racked arrays are then loaded into a refrigerated transfer vehicle 35 whereby the food is transferred to location 31. The transfer vehicle 35 is equipped with a load space incorporating suitable cooling means to ensure that trays of food in each rack does not exceed predetermined limits.

The transfer vehicle 35 then delivers along path S the racked arrays bearing the food to consumer site 31. At an intermediate location 34 at the site each racked array is unloaded from the transfer vehicle 35 and loaded into a regeneration trolleys 11 of the type described in connection with FIG. 1. The loaded trolley 11 is then moved closer to the location of the eventual consumers of the contents of the trolley 11. The trolley 11 is connected to a power supply and is then powered up to enable the food content of the racked array to be automatically regenerated according to a predetermined program held in the control unit of the trolley 11. Once regeneration has been completed the trolley 11 is opened and the trays and their contents distributed to the recipients.

Once consumption of the food has been complete the trays are returned to the racks 15 in the trolley 11. The trolley 11 is then transferred to the intermediate location 34 at the consumer site where the racks 15 loaded with the now used trays are transferred from the trolley 11 in a transfer vehicle 35 which returns the used trays and utensils to the supply location 30 for cleaning and reloading.

2. (AMENDED) A method of preparing and transporting food for rethermalization comprising the steps of:

at a first location:

preparing food;

apportioning the prepared food onto at least one tray;

loading the at least one tray, bearing the apportioned food, onto a rack for receiving and supporting a plurality of trays in a predetermined alignment;

providing a transfer vehicle for transporting the rack, loaded with the at least one tray bearing the apportioned food, from the first location to a second location spaced from the first location;

loading the rack, stacked with the at least one tray, onto a transfer vehicle for transportation to a second location;

transporting the rack, containing the at least one tray bearing the apportioned food, in the transfer vehicle to the second location;

at the second location:

transferring the rack from the transfer vehicle to a receptacle at the second location; and

rethermalizing the apportioned food while the at least one tray is supported by the rack at the second location.

9. (AMENDED) The method as claimed in claim 2, further comprising the step of using a mobile trolley incorporating heating/cooling means as the receptacle to facilitate rethermalization of the apportioned food on the at least one tray.

10. (AMENDED) The method as claimed in claim 2, further comprising the step of using one of:

a mobile trolley incorporating heating/cooling means as the receptacle;

the mobile trolley coupled in operable combination with a separate heating cooling means; and

the heating/cooling means to facilitate rethermalization of the apportioned food on the at least one tray.

13. (AMENDED) A method of preparing, transporting and dispensing food, the method comprising the steps of:

at a first location:

preparing the food for consumption;

apportioning the food onto a plurality of trays at the first location;
providing a maneuverable rack with a predetermined stacking arrangement of particular dimensions and stacking the plurality of trays, once apportioned with food, in the rack;

loading the rack, stacked with the plurality of trays, onto a transport vehicle for transportation to a second remote location;

transporting the rack, containing the at least one tray bearing the apportioned food, in the transport vehicle to the remote location;

at the second remote location:

transferring the rack, at the second location, from the transport vehicle to a receptacle, and the receptacle having at least one of heating means and cooling means, and the receptacle being configured to receive at least one rack;

activating one of the heating means and the cooling means to rethermalize the apportioned food of the plurality of trays of the rack; and

dispensing the plurality of trays, containing the apportioned food, to consumers for consumption once the apportioned food is sufficiently rethermalized.

21. (AMENDED) A method of preparing, transporting and dispensing food, the method comprising the steps of:

at a first location:

preparing food for consumption;

apportioning the food onto a plurality of trays at the first location;
providing a maneuverable rack and stacking the plurality of trays, once apportioned with food, in the rack;

loading the rack, stacked with the plurality of trays, onto a refrigerated transport vehicle for transportation to a second remote location;

transporting the rack, containing the at least one tray bearing the apportioned food, in the transport vehicle to the remote location;

at the second remote location:

transferring the rack, at the second location, from the refrigerated transport vehicle to a moveable receptacle, and the moveable receptacle having at least one of heating means and cooling means, and the receptacle being configured to receive at least one rack;

activating one of the heating means and the cooling means to regenerate the apportioned food of the plurality of trays of the rack while contained within the moveable receptacle; and

dispensing the plurality of trays, containing the apportioned food, from the moveable receptacle to consumers for consumption once the apportioned food is sufficiently regenerated;

collecting the plurality of trays with the rack in the receptacle following consumption by the consumer;

removing the at least one maneuverable rack from the moveable receptacle;

loading the at least one maneuverable rack back onto the transfer vehicle for transportation of the rack from the second location back to the first location for reuse while leaving the receptacle at the second location.

22. (AMENDED) A method of preparing, transporting and dispensing food between a series of remote locations, the method comprising the steps of:

at a first location:

preparing the food for consumption at a first location;

apportioning the food onto a plurality of trays at the first location;

stacking the trays in a manually maneuverable rack, and providing the rack with a predetermined stacking arrangement of particular dimensions;

loading the maneuverable rack onto a transfer vehicle for transportation to a second remote location;

transporting the rack, containing the at least one tray bearing the apportioned food, in the transport vehicle to the remote location;

at the second remote location:

transferring the maneuverable rack, at the second location, into a moveable receptacle comprising at least one of heating and cooling means, and the receptacle being configured to receive at least one of the plurality of racks;

relocating the moveable receptacle to a desired position;

activating at least one of the heating and cooling means prior to dispensing of the food trays to consumers;

dispensing the food trays to the consumers for consumption;

collecting and re-stacking the trays in the rack situated within the receptacle;

removing the at least one maneuverable rack from the moveable receptacle; and

loading the at least one maneuverable rack back onto the transfer vehicle for transportation of the rack from the second location back to the first location.

23. (AMENDED) A method of preparing and transporting food for rethermalization comprising the steps of:

apportioning food onto at least one tray;

at a first location:

loading at least one tray bearing the apportioned food onto a rack for receiving and supporting the at least one tray;

loading the rack, containing the at least one tray, onto a transport vehicle for transportation to a remote location from the first location;

transporting the rack, containing the at least one tray bearing the apportioned food, in the transport vehicle to the remote location;

at the remote location:

after the rack has been transported to the remote location in the transport vehicle, transferring the rack from the transport vehicle to a receptacle, the receptacle being configured to receive at least one rack; and

activating a heating system and a cooling system to regenerate the apportioned food on the at least one tray on the rack that is positioned in the receptacle.

32. (AMENDED) A method of preparing and transporting food for rethermalization comprising the steps of:

apportioning food onto at least one tray;

at a first location:

loading at least one tray bearing the apportioned food onto a rack for receiving and supporting the at least one tray;

loading the rack, containing the at least one tray, onto a transport vehicle for transportation to a remote location from the first location;

transporting the rack, containing the at least one tray bearing the apportioned food, in the transport vehicle to the remote location;

at the remote location:

09/928,546

Σ₆
after the rack has been transported to the remote location in the transport vehicle, transferring the rack from the transport vehicle to a receptacle, the receptacle being configured to receive at least one rack;

providing a heating system and a cooling system to regenerate the apportioned food on the at least one tray on the rack in the receptacle; and

activating at least one of the heating system and the cooling system to regenerate the apportioned food on the at least one tray on the rack that is positioned in the receptacle.

Σ₇
41. (AMENDED) A method of preparing, transporting and dispensing food, the method comprising the steps of:

preparing the food for consumption at a first location;

apportioning the food onto a plurality of trays at the first location;

providing a maneuverable rack, lacking any heating and cooling means, with a predetermined stacking arrangement of particular dimensions, and stacking the plurality of trays, once apportioned with food, in the rack;

loading the rack, stacked with the plurality of trays, onto a refrigerated transport vehicle for transportation to a second remote location;

transferring the rack, at the second location, from the refrigerated transport vehicle to a moveable receptacle, and the moveable receptacle having a heating means and a cooling means, and the receptacle being configured to receive at least one rack;

relocating the moveable receptacle to a desired position;

activating the heating means and the cooling means to rethermalize the apportioned food of the plurality of trays of the rack; and

dispensing the plurality of trays, containing the apportioned food, to consumers for consumption once the apportioned food is sufficiently rethermalized.

Σ₈
47. (NEW) A method of preparing, transporting and dispensing food, the method comprising the steps of:

at a first location:

preparing food for consumption;

apportioning the food onto a plurality of trays;

providing a rack and stacking the plurality of trays, once apportioned with food, in the rack;

loading the rack, stacked with the plurality of trays, onto a transport vehicle for transportation from the first location to a remote intermediate location;

transporting the rack, stacked with the plurality of trays bearing the apportioned food, in the transport vehicle to the intermediate location;

at the intermediate location:

transferring the rack, stacked with the plurality of trays bearing the apportioned food, from the transport vehicle to a separate receptacle, and the receptacle being configured to receive the rack, stacked with the plurality of trays bearing the apportioned food, and having a regeneration device for controlling a temperature of the apportioned food

activating the regeneration device to commence regeneration of the apportioned food of the plurality of trays on the rack;

transporting the receptacle with the rack, stacked with the plurality of trays bearing the apportioned food, to a second location; and

dispensing the plurality of trays bearing the apportioned food from the receptacle to consumers for consumption once the apportioned food is sufficiently regenerated.

48. (NEW) The method according to claim 2, further comprising the steps of:

following consumption by the consumers, collecting the plurality of trays and placing the plurality of trays in the rack received by the receptacle;

returning from the receptacle back to the intermediate location;

removing the rack, with the collected plurality of trays, from the receptacle and loading the rack onto the transfer vehicle for transportation of the rack, with the collected plurality of trays, from the intermediate location back to the first location for reuse while the moveable receptacle remaining at the intermediate location for reuse.

49. (NEW) A method of preparing, transporting and dispensing food, the method comprising the steps of:

at a first location:

preparing food for consumption;

apportioning the food onto a plurality of trays;

providing a rack and stacking the plurality of trays, once apportioned with food, in the rack;

09/928,546

loading the rack, stacked with the plurality of trays, onto a refrigerated transport vehicle for transportation from the first location to a remote intermediate location;

transporting the rack, stacked with the plurality of trays bearing the apportioned food, in the refrigerated transport vehicle to the intermediate location;

at the intermediate location:

transferring the rack, stacked with the plurality of trays bearing the apportioned food, from the refrigerated transport vehicle to a moveable receptacle, and the moveable receptacle being configured to receive the rack, stacked with the plurality of trays bearing the apportioned food, and having at least one of heating means and cooling means;

activating one of the heating means and the cooling means to commence regeneration of the apportioned food of the plurality of trays on the rack;

transporting the moveable receptacle with the rack, stacked with the plurality of trays bearing the apportioned food, to a second location;

dispensing the plurality of trays bearing the apportioned food from the receptacle to consumers for consumption once the apportioned food is sufficiently regenerated;

following consumption by the consumers, collecting the plurality of trays and placing the plurality of trays in the rack received by the moveable receptacle;

returning from the moveable receptacle back to the intermediate location;

removing the rack, with the collected plurality of trays, from the moveable receptacle and loading the rack onto the transfer vehicle for transportation of the rack, with the collected plurality of trays, from the intermediate location back to the first location for reuse while the moveable receptacle remaining at the intermediate location for reuse.